



the  
**Episcopal Diocese  
of Connecticut**

The Rt. Rev. James E. Curry  
Bishop Suffragan

**Judiciary Committee Public Hearing**

Monday, March 21, 2011

**TESTIMONY OF THE RIGHT REVEREND JAMES E. CURRY, BISHOP SUFFRAGAN OF  
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CONNECTICUT**

**IN SUPPORT OF HB-6599  
AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION**

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox, distinguished members of the Committee. My name is James Curry. I am one of the bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. I speak in support of HB-6599.

A key underlying principal of the Baptismal Covenant of the Episcopal Church is that we promise to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. We believe that discrimination based on gender identity and expression is in direct conflict with that principal. My faith teaches me that it is necessary to provide legal protections for those who as a group are targeted for discrimination. In 2009 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the governing body of my denomination, comprised of laypersons, clergy, and bishops from every diocese, specifically affirmed its support of the extension of existing federal laws that prohibit employment discrimination to include discrimination because of gender identity and expression. The Annual Convention of the Diocese of Connecticut has affirmed that position as it applies to extending the anti-discrimination laws of the State of Connecticut.

The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut supported Connecticut hate crime legislation in 2004 that included gender identity and expression as a class. HB6599 takes the important next step to provide legal protection for those who are discriminated against simply because of who they are.

Some opponents of this bill are trying to stir up fears by equating the phrase 'gender identity and expression' with criminal and predatory behavior. Their assertion has been used at other times in our country's history against other groups of people simply because of who they were. It wasn't true for those groups and it is just not true in this case.

What is true is that all people should have the chance to live without fear of discrimination and to earn a living in order to provide for themselves and their families. I have seen the devastation done to individuals and families who have been victimized by job discrimination because of gender identity and expression. Our society is diminished when this discrimination is allowed to continue. Access to employment and promotion, as well as protection from being fired, need to be based on a person's skill set and ability to do the job at hand.

HB 6599 affirms basic fairness in the workplace and underscores our society's value of civil rights for all persons. I urge that you recommend it for consideration by the whole General Assembly.